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UNCLAS ACCRA 000414

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR SHARES TIP CONCERNS WITH MINISTER

REF: ACCRA 00386

1. (SBU) Summary: On February 1, the Ambassador called on Minister of Women and Children (MOWAC)'s Affairs Hajia Alima Mahama, and emphasized that credible implementation of the Human Trafficking Act signed by President Kufuor in December 2005 will play a significant role in determining whether Ghana returns to Tier 1 in our annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report. The Minister announced MOWAC's sponsorship of a fund to increase the number of women candidates in the August 2006 district assembly races. She called for the revitalization of nutrition centers throughout Ghana to fortify local grains and cereals to feed needy children. She also requested USG assistance to sensitize traditional authorities on human rights concerns such as TIP (see reftel) and domestic violence. End summary.

MOWAC PLANS

2. (U) The Ambassador thanked Mahama for her role in First Lady Laura Bush's visit to Ghana in January since Mahama met the First Lady at Kotoka International Airport in Accra upon her arrival and accompanied the First Lady to Korle Bu Teaching Hospital's HIV/AIDS ward (see reftel).

3. (SBU) In a practice that has been imitated by several of Ghana's ministers, some of whom have presidential aspirations, Mahama invited electronic and print media to the initial minutes of her meeting with the Ambassador. She then announced that MOWAC will establish a Women in Local Government fund to support women candidates.

TIP TIER DECISION

4. (SBU) After the media departed, the Ambassador praised the Ministry's successful efforts to pass the Human Trafficking Act in 2005 but explained that the USG will evaluate Ghana's tier ranking based on its demonstrated willingness to punish human traffickers through prosecutions and extraditions. She noted that the extradition of NPP parliamentarian Grace Coleman remains a sticking point as the USG not only seeks evidence the GOG is serious about punishing human traffickers but also hopes to negotiate a new extradition treaty as the existing one dates to 1931 and does not include many modern crimes. PolOff explained that the annual TIP report contains sections evaluating the GOG's progress on prosecution, protection and prevention. He told the Minister that while G/TIP and post have lauded the GOG's continuing and expanding efforts to protect victims and prevent human trafficking, no prosecutions have taken place under the new law. He noted that there were a few human trafficking cases which GOG authorities have investigated since parliament passed the bill last July 28, but that they could not be prosecuted under the new law since it did not take effect until early December. The Ambassador urged the GOG to prosecute cases under the new law.

COMMENT

5. Both the Minister and Chief Director Kojo Amoakwa registered surprise, and thought Ghana was certain to return to Tier 1 because it enacted an anti-trafficking law. Post recommends quickly initiating the \$250,000 in anti-human trafficking committed in August 2005 and funding the Ministry's proposal in reftel so police and judiciary can begin prosecutions.

BRIDGEWATER